## How Can Administrators and Teachers Support Educational Interpreters?

Recruiting and retaining qualified interpreters can be difficult, particularly in rural areas where interpreters are scarce, and possibly in urban areas where community jobs are more available. Strategies to attract and retain interpreters include the following:

◆ Valuing the educational and communication differences of students who benefit from interpreting services;

◆ Treating interpreters as members of the educational community;

◆ Learning interpreters' ethical codes and working with them to avoid conflicts;

◆ Working with interpreters for schedules that reduce physical stress that can lead to repetitive use injuries;

◆ Including interpreters in the IEP meeting and instructional deliberations that focus on communication;

◆ Fostering good working relationships with teachers who may be naïve to rapid oral reading rates, positioning and lighting issues, multiple speaker demands, and technical vocabulary demands;

◆ Fostering the interpreter's professional development with supportive inservices at the school and encouraging professional growth outside the school; and

◆ Knowing Virginia's regulations and working collaboratively with interpreters, students, parents, teachers, and administrators to meet the regulations.
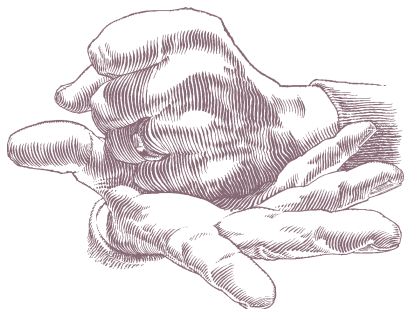
To Learn More About Educational Interpreting

check these web sites:
www.rid.org/eduterp.html
www.vrid.org
www.nasdse.org
www.special-ed-careers.org/pdf/interpreter.pdf
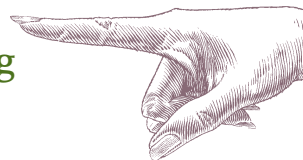
Recommended Readings:

Antia, S.D. & Kreimeyer, K.H. (2001). The role of interpreters in inclusive classrooms. *American Annals of the Deaf, 146,* 355-365. *(http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/annals)*

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (2000). *Educational Interpreting: A Collection of Articles from VIEWS.* Silver Spring, MD: RID, Inc. (*www.rid.org* or 703-838-0030 [v]or 703-838-0459 [tt])

Seal, B. C. (1998). *Best Practices in Educational Interpreting.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon. (*www.abacon.com* or 1-800-278-3525)
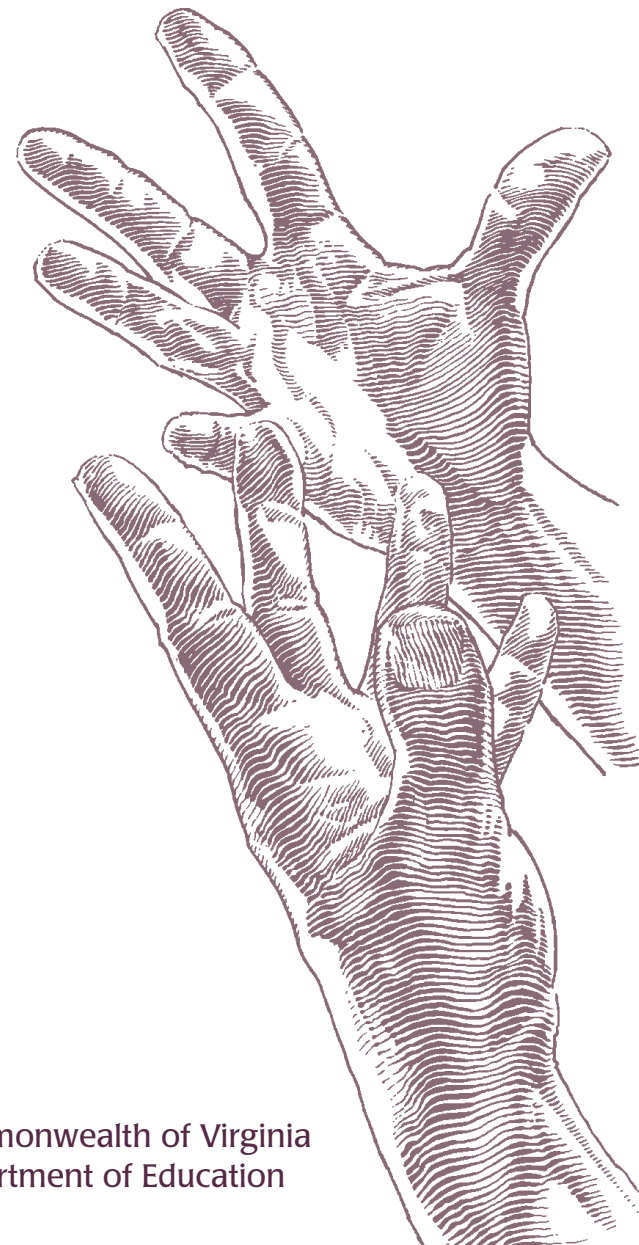
Virginia Department of Education

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Educational Interpreting Services

Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education

Educational Interpreting Services

- Include sign language interpreting, sign language transliterating, cued speech/language transliterating, and oral transliterating

- Accomodate the communication needs for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, as determined by the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team

Educational interpreting can occur anywhere (classroom, lab, gym, field, stage, shop) that a student is engaged in learning.

What Is An Educational Interpreter?

Educational interpreters are professionals who play a critical role in facilitating communication between students with hearing loss and their teachers and peers. Educational interpreters have special knowledge, skills, and credentials that qualify them for these services. The term *interpreting* is commonly used to represent a range of services:

Sign language interpreters improve communication by signing the spoken language of hearing persons and voicing the sign language of deaf or hard-of-hearing consumers. This voice-to-sign and sign-to-voice interpreting crosses two languages, generally English and American Sign Language.

Sign language transliterators facilitate voice-to-sign and sign-to-voice communication while working within one language, generally spoken and signed English.

Cued speech transliterators add cues to the restated spoken message for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons and restate or voice the message of the deaf or hard-of-hearing persons who may cue when he or she talks.

Oral transliterators silently repeat what a hearing person says in a manner that enables the deaf or hard-of-hearing person to understand it; they also restate what the deaf or hard-of-hearing person says for hearing persons.

Other Roles

Sometimes interpreters are asked to teach sign language, sponsor a sign language club, or act as instructional aides for students who have special needs (e.g., cerebral palsy, ADHD). These additional assignments are appropriate only when they do not remove the interpreter from his/her primary responsibility, when the assignment does not conflict with the interpreter's ethical codes (see *www.rid.org* for the Code of Ethics), and when the interpreter is qualified to serve in these exceptional roles.

Sometimes interpreters find that they have idle time. Reassigned time is just as reasonable for educational interpreters as it is for other members of the school team. Important distinctions need to be made, however, between idle time that occurs during tests or seatwork and idle time that occurs because of a student's absence. Serving as a student's instructor during seatwork is typically not appropriate, yet being available and vigilant for student questions during a test or seatwork is appropriate. Serving as a student's disciplinarian or parent liaison is also not appropriate, yet reassignment during a student's extended absence may be reasonable. Careful deliberation of these "other roles" is necessary in ensuring that the interpreter's primary role is not compromised.

Team Interpreting

In intense communication settings, interpreters may need to work in pairs or on teams. In classes where language is highly technical or where videotapes, oral reading, or group interaction are fast-paced, sign language interpreters are at risk of physical injury associated with repetitive movements. Error rates also tend to increase when interpreters are fatigued. Scheduling interpreters to work in teams to reduce physical and cognitive stress is important in these situations.

Why Are Educational Interpreting Services Important?

Students who are deaf or hard-of- hearing deserve access to the same education that their hearing peers enjoy. Educational interpreters serve as the critical link to learning in a setting where spoken language predominates. Access to the social communication that occurs in educational settings is also important to all students, including those who may "hear" it through
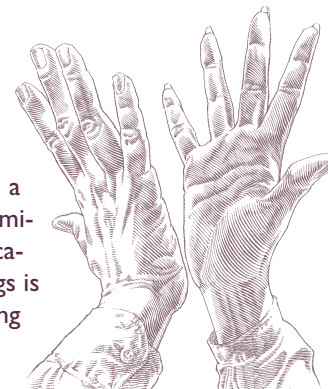
their interpreters. Enabling students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing the fullest possible participation in their educational experiences is not only a good practice, but it is also a right guaranteed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

What Regulations Govern Educational Interpreting?

The Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia require educational interpreters to hold or be working toward national certification or the state's equivalent (Section 8 VAC 20-80-45 E. http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Sped/varegs.pdf)

What Are The Qualifications?

- An **RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf)** certified interpreter holds a national certificate in interpreting (CI), certificate in transliterating (CT) or in both (CSC, comprehensive skills certificate); oral transliterators hold an oral transliterating certificate (OTC). An NAD (National Association of the Deaf) certified interpreter holds a Level IV (Advanced) or V (Master) certificate.

- A **TECUnit** certified transliterator holds a TSC 4 (Expert) or 3 (Competent) certificate in cued speech transliterating.

- A **VQAS (Virginia Quality Assurance Screening) III** interpreter/transliterator holds a screening level from the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) that ensures at least 80 percent accuracy in interpreting or transliterating (sign, cued speech, or oral).

What Other Traits Are Desired In Educational Interpreters?

Educational interpreters who are in high demand not only meet the state's regulations but also have coursework, certificates, or degrees in interpreting. They are skilled in the language and vocabulary of academics, in abstract thinking, and have a working knowledge of the developmental changes that occur in students in kindergarten through grade 12.